

meetings. Illegal voting and violence at these meetings often perpetrates as great a wrong as at the polls upon the day of the election. To obviate that, for certain it is that sooner or later we shall be under the necessity of regulating them by law, I will offer this amendment to the 3d section, if the motion to reconsider should prevail:

Sec. 3, line 13, after the word "State," insert the words:

"Or who shall be guilty of, or accessory to any fraud, force, surprise, or bribery, at any primary meeting or nominating convention, to procure himself or any other person to be nominated to any office, national or State, or municipal."

The motion to reconsider was agreed to.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE moved the foregoing amendment.

Mr. THRUSTON. I do not see how we can properly make that a part of the constitution. The meetings to which the gentleman refers are held under no law of the State. They are merely voluntary assemblages of persons, governed by no law of the State. It seems to me therefore that to attempt to provide a remedy in the organic law, to apply to meetings held under no law in the State, cannot remove an evil of that sort, and it would be giving such wide scope as to introduce a subject not properly before us at all. I heartily agree with the gentleman that it is desirable to prevent fraud in the selection of officers to be voted for; but I hardly see how we can introduce it into our organic law. I do not see how we can regulate a meeting where the citizens voluntarily assemble themselves together.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. It is a fact well known to all the members of this convention that nominations for an office are in point of fact an election at all times; that is to say that those who are nominated by one party or the other, are the persons who are to be elected; and if one party has considerable predominance, a nomination by that party is an election. It follows as a necessary consequence that if the nomination be forced at such an election, either by illegal voting, the voting of persons not qualified to vote, or by deterring voters by violence from coming up to take their part in the nomination, a fraud is perpetrated on the electors just as really as though it were done at the ballot-box. This is the practical result everywhere; and yet these are perfectly free and voluntary assemblages, as has been said by the gentleman from Allegany (Mr. Thruston.) They operate to cause wrong; and the question is: Shall these assemblages, operating to cause this wrong be in any way subject to the control of the law. I believe the time has come when they should be made so. These nominations were originally not know. When the federal college for the election of the President was adopted, it was supposed that

they would be the persons to select the man for the presidential office without a nomination; but now for thirty years no person has been elected but as the result of a nomination. And that has gone down from one office to another, even to the constable and the lowest offices in the gift of the people. Whenever unscrupulous politicians combine with one another at ward or district meetings, they will force the people to vote for men who are unfit and unqualified. I have known in meetings in the counties, of thirty or forty persons, 150 to 200 votes to be cast. Some in Baltimore city are regulated better than that; yet the same thing is often done there. Anything which interferes with the justice and fairness of these meetings interferes with the purity of the election. I desire therefore to have these meetings in some manner regulated by law. For that reason I have offered the amendment and shall be glad to see it adopted.

Mr. THOMAS. The amendment of my colleague is a very good one if it can be enforced; but it appears to me that we cannot control the elective franchise in primary meetings. You had better at once put a provision into the constitution making it illegal for any man to become the nominee of any clique, caucus, nominating convention, or primary meeting of any kind; and say that if he does not come out as an independent candidate, on his own hook, he shall not be eligible to any office in the gift of the people. Or you may as well go further and say that every citizen of Maryland shall attend the primary meetings, if your primary meetings are to control the elections at the polls. There are a certain class of men in Baltimore who always will attend the primary meetings; and there is a certain other class who always will stay away from the primary meetings. It is their own lookout if they do not go. I have heard certain men say that they would not go to primary meetings and rub up against greasy mechanics. If they stay away, and the greasy mechanics go and make the nominations, they have exercised a right which you cannot take from them. It is for every good citizen to look this thing in the face. They should go into the primary meetings and control these bad men who make the bad nominations. Like the gentleman from Allegany, I do not see that any good can be done by the adoption of this amendment. It can have no practical effect at all. If I thought it would, I would most cheerfully vote for it.

Mr. CHAMBERS. The amendment, if I understand it, proposes to prevent illegal voting at primary meetings. I ask the gentleman from Baltimore if there is any standard by which the legality of votes at primary meetings is to be determined?

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. Certainly.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I know of no such law or constitutional provision.